# THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

HENRY C. SHELDON

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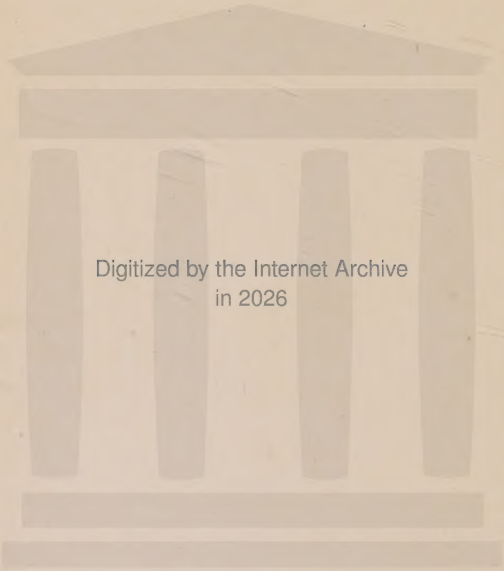
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# The Mystery Religions and The New Testament

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# PREFACE

This book has been written, not for the small class of experts, but for the large class of those who are likely to appreciate a compact exposition of a prominent theme in New Testament criticism. We respect, however, the function of the experts, and venture to cherish the hope that of those among them who may chance to look into this little treatise a fair proportion may be able to approve its tenor.

# CHAPTER I

## A GLANCE AT THE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS

The general conception underlying the term "Mystery," as used in this connection, has been very well expressed in the following sentences: "The word Mystery was the name of a religious society, founded not on citizenship or kindred, but on the choice of its members, for the practice of rites by which, it was believed, their happiness might be promoted both in this world and in the next. The Greek word μυστήριον does not, of its own force, imply anything, in our sense of the word 'mysterious,' that is to say, obscure or difficult to comprehend. That which it connotes

is, rather, something which can only be known on being imparted by some one already in possession of it, not by mere reason and research which are common to all."[1] Thus the Mystery stood for a knowledge and a benefit that were accessible only by way of initiation. The one who had been initiated was considered under very imperative bonds of secrecy. His obligation, however, to maintain silence concerned less the general significance of the Mystery than its ceremonial details.

In a full account of the Mystery Religions notice would need to be taken of the cult of Ishtar and Tammuz. But as our survey pertains only to such religious types as had an opportunity to impinge upon early Christianity on the theater of the Græco-Roman world, a specific dealing with the Babylonian cult is hardly

[1] S. Cheetham, The Mysteries Pagan and Christian, pp. 40, 41.

in place, though a reference to it as an influential antecedent may be quite pertinent. Of direct concern are the Græco-Thracian Mysteries, having their principal seat at Eleusis, and associated in particular with Demeter, Persephone, and Dionysos; those of Cybele and Attis in Phrygia; of Aphrodite and Adonis in Syria; of Isis, Osiris, and Serapis originating in Egypt; and of Mithra, primarily connected with Persia and spreading thence in the Roman empire. In addition to these it is appropriate to take note of certain types of religious thought and endeavor which were in close affinity with the standpoint of the Mystery Religions. Here, without doubt, are to be included Orphism and the scheme represented in the Hermetic writings. Some consider that it is appropriate to bring into consideration the teaching of Posidonius, who figured at Rhodes in the first

half of the century preceding the birth of Christianity, and who, along with a certain degree of adherence to the Stoic philosophy, combined much of an eclectic temper. It is claimed also that an incipient Gnosticism, indebted not a little for spirit and content to the Mystery Religions, was already in the field when Christianity began its mission. Note is taken of the fact that the knowledge (γνῶσις), which was the boast of the Gnostic sects, was referred rather to mystical relationships and transcendent communications than to the labored procedures of scholarship and science.

In connection with the Mystery Religions as a class, it is important to recognize the serious limitations which are imposed upon our knowledge. "The study of the antique Mysteries," says De Jong, "is extremely difficult, since we have at

our disposal only fragmentary and often very scanty material."[2] "Perhaps no loss," remarks Cumont, "caused by the general wreck of ancient literature has been more disastrous than that of the liturgic books of paganism. A few mystic formulas quoted incidentally by pagan or Christian authors and a few fragments of hymns in honor of the gods are practically all that escaped destruction. . . . The treatises on mythology that have been preserved deal almost entirely with the ancient Hellenic fables made famous by the classic writers, to the neglect of the Oriental religions. There is no period of the Roman empire concerning which we are so little informed as the third century, precisely the one during which the Oriental religions reached the apogee of their power."[3] No one of these re-

[2] Das Antike Mysterienwesen, p. 4.
[3] The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism, pp. 11–14.

ligions has bequeathed a complete liturgy or ritual. An enthusiastic description of certain scenes pertaining to the initiation into the Mysteries of Isis, as contained in the Metamorphoses of Apuleius, a writer of the second century, is perhaps as noteworthy as anything which has been furnished on this subject. Albrecht Dieterich, it is true, has claimed that in the content of a Paris papyrus we have a substantially complete liturgy of Mithraism.[4] But Cumont and others have challenged the legitimacy of the identification. It would seem, therefore, that the specified document offers a very insecure foundation to build upon.

This fragmentary character of the sources of information evidently enforces the need of caution against indulging in over-broad and ill-founded inductions. It is possible for a re-

[4] Eine Mithrasliturgie, 1903.

viewer to be tempted to gather up the scattered hints derivable from the several Mystery Religions and then to apply them collectively to one or another of these religions, thus assigning to it a larger and more definite content than is warrantable. A suspicion that recent scholarship has not wholly escaped this temptation easily intrudes itself. "There is undoubtedly," writes Maurice Jones, "a tendency among the students of these cults to erect a building out of material that is wholly inadequate for the purpose, and to counterbalance their lack of genuine matter by inserting their own hypotheses."[5]

On the question of the period and province of the Mysteries it is to be noted that those of Eleusis were started at an early point in the history of Greece. The cult of Demeter,

[5] The New Testament in the Twentieth Century, p. 138.

which was central to them, is supposed to have been current in Attica as early as the eleventh century before Christ;[6] and, while a considerable period may have elapsed before the scheme at Eleusis was relatively matured, it had doubtless been a factor in Greek religion for centuries prior to the culmination of Attic civilization. In respect of their sphere these Mysteries were limited by the requirement that their celebration should take place at Eleusis and by the exclusion of the possibility of initiation elsewhere. On this score they were placed at a disadvantage as compared with various rivals in the Græco-Roman world. For, whatever local associations they may have had, the Mysteries generally were free to gather groups of devotees in any quarter. At a comparatively early date they began to invade the West. "First,

[6] Foucart, Les Mystères d'Eleusis, p. 249.

there was a slow infiltration of despised exotic religions, then toward the end of the first century the Orontes, the Nile, and the Halys, to use the words of Juvenal, flowed into the Tiber to the great indignation of the Romans. Finally a hundred years later an influx of Egyptian, Semitic, and Persian beliefs and customs took place that threatened to submerge all that Greek and Roman genius had laboriously built up."[7] The Cult of Cybele was represented in Rome as early as B. C. 204. Under the empire it obtained considerable patronage in the West. In the Greek states it received only a scanty welcome. The cult of Isis and of the related Egyptian divinities had begun to take root in Greece and southern Italy in the third century before Christ. At Rome it was discountenanced by the early emperors,

[7] Cumont. The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism, p. 23.

distinct attempts to drive it out being made by Augustus and Tiberius. But their successors did not follow their example. Otho was openly favorable to the Egyptian priests and rites, as was also Domitian. From the end of the first century the cult of Isis won an ever-increasing company of adherents till the culmination of its influence in the early part of the third century.[8] Mithraism secured but few converts in the Hellenic domain. It was represented at Rome as early as B. C. 67, but gained no appreciable foothold till the closing decades of the next century. In the second and third Christian centuries it was given a wide extension in the region stretching from the Caspian Sea to Italy and the Eastern part of Gaul. Being to a peculiar degree the religion of soldiers, it was carried wherever the

[8] Lafaye, Histoire du Cultes des Divinités d'Alexandrie, pp. 24–63.

Roman legions were sent, and was furthermore propagated by slaves from the East and by Syrian merchants. The Emperor Commodus (A. D. 180–192) became an adherent, and various of his successors regarded it with favor. The climax of its progress was probably reached toward the end of the third century. Julian the Apostate beyond the middle of the next century exerted himself to the utmost to restore its fortunes, but his short-lived reaction (361–363) availed little to check the movement toward irretrievable downfall. The Orphic brotherhoods were an appreciable factor in the Greek domain, including Southern Italy, from the sixth century before Christ. The Hermetic literature in its extant form was not earlier than the second century of our era. It is supposed, however, that it incorporated ways of thinking that had been operative at an earlier

date.[9] How widely it became current is not clearly determined. Reitzenstein's conclusion that it represented a typical form of the piety of the second and third centuries has been challenged by Cumont and others.[10] From the tenor of its content it is natural to conclude that its patronage was limited, for the most part, to the more speculative minds whose adherence to the classic faiths had become little else than nominal. After its contact with Christianity Gnosticism became, especially in the sec-

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[9] Professor E. D. Burton, after noting diverse views as to the date of the Hermetic writings, adds this statement: "To affirm that they influenced New Testament usage would be hazardous, but they perhaps throw some light on the direction in wnich thought was moving in New Testament times" (American Journal of Theology, October, 1916, p. 566). J. M. Creed reviews the data presented by Reitzenstein and draws this conclusion: "The bulk of the Hermetic writings were probably written in the third century or not earlier than the end of the second century" (Journal of Theological Studies, July, 1914). G. R. S. Mead concludes that some of these documents "are at least contemporaneous with the earliest writings of Christianity" (Thrice-Greatest Hermes, III, 323).

[10] Cumont, The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism, pp. 233, 234; Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans, pp. 76, 77; Kennedy, St. Paul and the Mystery Religions, pp. 111, 112.

ond century, a widely disseminated phenomenon. In the pre-Christian stage it existed more extensively in the unorganized form of congenial materials than in the character of specific sects, though there were some parties to whom that designation might properly be applied.

In respect of the sources from which the several Mystery Religions drew their materials opinion is not unanimous. Two things, however, may be regarded as established. In the first place, it cannot be doubted that the Babylonian story of Ishtar and Tammuz wrought in some degree for the production of kindred representations in Syria and Asia Minor, and it is possible that through these channels it may have touched religious thought in Greece. In the second place, it cannot fairly be questioned that the cults which reached to wide limits

in the Roman empire, like those of Isis and Mithra, ultimately incorporated materials from various sources, so that they became in a rather emphatic sense syncretistic. There is good reason also for concluding that Orphism was open in the course of its development to the introduction of new elements, standing in this respect somewhat in contrast with the relatively fixed character of the Eleusinian Mysteries. On the relation of both to Egyptian antecedents contrasted views have been expressed. Foucart has argued very earnestly for the distinct and large indebtedness of the Eleusinian rites to those of Isis; indeed, he makes the former no more than a Hellenic version of the latter.[11] Farnell, on the other hand, rejects the idea of radical influence from the Egyptian quarter.[12] Foucart

[11] Les Mystères d'Eleusis.

[12] The Higher Aspects of the Greek Religion. Compare De Jong, pp. 53, 54.

has also drawn the conclusion that Orphism borrowed, especially through the medium of Pythagoras, quite largely from Egyptian sources. On the other side Maass asserts the conviction that the Orphic religion "is in essence national-Hellenic."[13] For our purpose it is not necessary to pronounce on the disputed points. We see no reason why an intermediate view may not be eligible.

Viewed in their general cast, the Mysteries appear rather as the affair of voluntary brotherhoods than as state institutions. Their status was very much like that of the early Christian societies. There were some, however, that claimed a definite political relation. From the seventh century before Christ the Eleusinian Mysteries were under the direct patronage of Athens, and the Samothra-

[13] Orpheus, Untersuchung zu Griechischen, Römischen, Altchristlichen Jenseitsdichtung und Religion.

cian also were accorded state recognition. The Ptolemies in Egypt were active patrons of the cult of Serapis, but their jurisdiction covered only a fraction of the area over which this form of Egyptian religion gathered its groups of worshipers.

It is the common verdict of those who have written upon the subject of the Mysteries that they offered to their votaries no considerable body of either moral or metaphysical instruction. A modicum of moral impression may have been ministered by them; but of moral indoctrination nothing worthy of note.[14] The statement of Aristotle respecting the transactions at Eleusis, "they give only impressions," may be regarded as an

[14] At Eleusis the homicide was rejected as also the professor of unhallowed rites. "Otherwise there seem to have been no definite moral demands upon the candidates. They were not redeemed from any sinful ways. No pattern of conduct was held up before them; nor was the nature of the future life made clear" (J. Estlin Carpenter, Phases of Early Christianity, p. 217).

authentic description of the Mysteries generally. It is indeed granted that Orphism developed an appreciable body of teaching, and that in the mystical Hermetic literature the doctrinal element, though not strictly uniform or self-consistent, was by no means wanting. There is no hesitation, however, in the verdict that the liturgical, the scenic, and the spectacular, rather than the formally didactic, were in general characteristic of the Mysteries. They included rites of ablution; they emphasized the main features in the mythological stories of the divinities with whom communion was sought; they led on the subjects of initiation into scenes which were designed to stimulate the imagination and to awaken a vivid sense both of the terrors and joys which lie beyond the earthly pilgrimage. How effectively they could enkindle the fancy of an impressible person is intimated by the

description which Apuleius has given of initiation into the mysteries of Isis. These are his words: "I have transcended the boundaries of death, I have trodden the threshold of Proserpine, and having traversed all the elements I am returned to the earth. In the middle of the night I have seen the sun scintillating with a pure light; I have approached the gods below and the gods above, and have worshiped face to face."[15] Some allowance may be made for the stylistic ambition of the rhetorician; but it is entirely probable that the Mysteries, at least in the later period of their history, by the employment of various dramatic expedients, such as the combination of deep shadows and brilliant lights, were often able to exercise a kind of hypnotic influence over those who sought in them pledges and safeguards of future well-being. That the

[15] Metamorphoses, xi, 23.

scenic representations were in general well adapted to their end there is every reason to believe. This is not saying, however, that they harbored nothing which a normally educated sense of propriety would reprobate. The contrary must be admitted if the interpretation which a prominent expositor has put upon the nuptials of Zeus and Demeter, as figured at Eleusis, is authorized.[16]

A naturalistic basis of the mysteries is quite unmistakable. The divinities whom they commemorated were primarily vegetation gods, or, more broadly speaking, gods linked with the needs and fortunes of vegetable and animal life. Such distinctively was the earliest in the list, the Babylonian Tammuz, "the young god of vegetation who dies in the heat of the summer solstice and descends to

[16] Foucart, Les Mystères d'Eleusis, pp. 475–497.

the world below, leaving the earth barren until he returns."[17] In Mithraism this point of view may not have been relatively prominent; but in the Mystery cults generally the divinities were closely connected with the requirements of cereal growths and animal procreation. The following statement respecting Adonis, Attis, and Osiris may be given a wider application: "All three apparently embodied the powers of fertility in general and of vegetation in particular. All three were believed to have died and risen again from the dead; and the divine death and resurrection of all three were dramatically represented at annual festivals, which their worshipers celebrated with alternate transports of sorrow and joy, of weeping and exultation. The natural phenomena thus sympathetically conceived and mythically represented were the great

[17] Farnell, Greece and Babylon, p. 105.

changes of the seasons, especially the most striking and impressive of all, the decay and revival of vegetation; and the intention of the sacred dramas was to revive and strengthen by sympathetic magic the failing energies of nature, in order that the trees should bear fruit, that the corn should ripen, that men and animals should reproduce their kind."[18] No doubt the gods who were the chief figures in the Mysteries came to stand for other functions than those named in the citation. A great variety of powers and offices was assigned to Osiris and Dionysos, and to a nearly equal extent others were given a multiple role by the faith and enthusiasm of their devotees. However, the significant fact remains that in the Mystery Religions, as a class, a naturalistic basis was prominent.

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[18] Frazer, Adonis, Attis, Osiris, Studies in the History of Oriental Religions, p. 383.

The naturalistic phase was coupled with magic, as indeed is emphatically indicated in Frazer's statement of the design of the rites in which tribute was paid to Adonis, Attis, and Osiris. In so far as the Mysteries were related to the Babylonian and Egyptian religions they naturally shared in the element of magic, for that element abounded in those religions. It seems also to be the judgment of scholars that the Mysteries wrought for the increased dominion of magic in the Græco-Roman world. As late as the reign of Augustus, Cumont tells us, professional magicians were despised, but with the advance of the Oriental cults they rose in esteem.[19] How strongly the current set in that direction is indicated by the ultimate gravitation of Neo-Platonism into theurgy. There are also direct evidences that the Mysteries in their scheme of rites

[19] The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism, pp. 186, 187.

built on the basis of magic. "It was necessary," we are informed, "at Eleusis that the formulas divulged to the initiated should be pronounced with the right intonation, otherwise they would lose their effectiveness."[20] This is a plain hint that the formulas were construed after the analogy of magic. Gasquet probably renders a true description when he says: "The sacraments of the Mysteries always suppose a magical intervention. It is words, rites, formulas that have the faculty of acting directly upon the gods and of constraining their will. It imports little whether the man making use of them understands either their sense or their reason."[21]

The age in which the Mysteries had their widest diffusion in the Roman empire was a period much given

[20] Foucart, Les Mystères d'Eleusis, p. 150.
[21] Essai sur le Culte et les Mystères de Mithra, pp. 80, 81.

to astrology and sidereal mysticism in general. In the mystical scheme of Possidonius large account was made of the stars and of their interconnection with the fortunes of souls. In his thinking Chaldæan elements were blended with Stoic, and his influence helped to give currency to a complex sidereal scheme as an important and conditioning factor in religion. "Wide extension was awarded to the doctrine that the soul in descending from heaven takes on the attributes of the planets through which she journeys, until finally she enters into embodied existence. After death she has, by a reverse movement, to make the heavenward journey, in order, after having laid aside at the several stations the limitations of earthly existence, to return to her original home in the realm of light."[22] Not all of

[22] Wendland, Die Hellenistisch-Römische Kultur in ihren Beziehungen zu Judentum und Christentum, p. 166.

the Mystery Religions may have taken specific account of such a pronounced sidereal framework. It was, however, congenially related to their naturalistic and magical trend, and it is quite certain that in Mithraism, which encountered Chaldæan influences during its movement to the West, it was prominently represented. The following sketch of the Mithraic scheme for the ascent of the soul will serve to illustrate: "The heavens were divided into seven spheres, each of which was conjoined with a planet. A sort of ladder composed of eight superposed gates, the first seven of which were constructed of different metals, was the symbolic suggestion, in the temples, of the road to be followed to reach the supreme region of the fixed stars. To pass from one story to the next the wayfarer had each time to enter a gate guarded by an angel of Ormuzd. The initiates alone, to whom

the appropriate formulas had been taught, knew how to appease the inexorable guardians. As the soul traversed these different zones, it rid itself, as one would of garments, of the passions and faculties it had received in its descent to the earth. It abandoned to the moon its vital and nutritive energy, to Mercury its desires, to Venus its wicked appetites, to the sun its intellectual capacities, to Mars its love of war, to Jupiter its ambitious dreams, to Saturn its inclinations. It was naked, stripped of every vice and every sensibility, when it penetrated the eighth heaven to enjoy there, as an essence supreme, and in the eternal light that bathed the gods, beatitude without end."[23] In the Hermetic literature a kindred representation occurs.[24]

Under proper limitations reference

[23] Cumont, The Mysteries of Mithra, pp. 144, 145.
[24] Reitzenstein, Poimandres, p. 231.

may be made to a pantheistic tendency in the Mystery Religions. The limitations are that this tendency did not come to noteworthy expression in all of them; and in any case was conspicuous rather in the later than the earlier stages. Of Orphism it is noticed that, while it did not discard mythological terminology, it revealed a certain affiliation with pantheism in its tendency to conceive of the gods as vague cosmic powers.[25] In the Hermetic writings, as in the Gnostic systems, pantheistic and dualistic strains were combined.[26] According to the plain representation of the former, God not only contains all things, but is veritably all things.[27] In their later stages the Egyptian cults showed

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[25] Rohde, Psyche, II, 114, 115.

[26] Reitzenstein, Poimandres, p. 46. G. R. S. Mead, while noticing the double aspect, argues that it is not appropriate to take much account of the dualistic phase. Thrice-Greatest Hermes, II, 30, 31, 115, 116, 160, 218.

[27] Ménard, Hermès Trismégiste, Traduction Complete, pp. lxxiv, lxxviii. See also Mead, II, 16, 17, 104–106, 212, 276, 309, 377.

a close affinity with a pantheistic standpoint. They were developed in this direction, if we may trust Cumont, by Chaldæan and Syrian influences. He writes: "Isis became a pantheistic power that was everything in one, *una quae est omnia.* The authority of Serapis was no less exalted, and his field no less extensive. He also was regarded as a universal god of whom men liked to say that he was 'unique.' In him all energies were centered, although the functions of Zeus, of Pluto, or of Helios were especially ascribed to him. . . . This theological system, which did not gain the upper hand in the Occident until the second century of our era, was not brought in by Egypt. It did not have the exclusive predominance there that it had under the empire, and even in Plutarch's time it was only one creed among many. The deciding influence in this matter was exercised

by the Syrian Baals and the Chaldæan astrology."[28] The result was an approach to monotheism, a cosmic power being acknowledged, which, indeed, might be manifested in different forms and addressed under different names, but which it was thought appropriate to describe as one and universal.

In the relative prevalence of the pantheistic viewpoint a favorable basis of syncretism, or comity, between the Mystery Religions was obviously provided. Those who had any motive to compound the different divinities were able to plead that there was no real difference between them, since they were to be interpreted as only varying designations of the power which is one in essence though diversified in manifestation. Oriental and Egyptian gods were freely identified with the Greek, as Mithra with

[28] The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism, pp. 89, 90.

Helios, Isis with Demeter, Osiris with Dionysos. With this theoretical syncretism a practical comity was conjoined to some extent. There were priests who functioned in the temples of more than one of the mystic cults.[29] On the part of Mithraism a special motive may have operated in favor of this composite role. Unlike the other Mysteries the Mithraic seem not to have admitted women. "Among the hundreds of inscriptions that have come down to us not one mentions either a priestess, a woman initiate, or even a donatress."[30] We are left then to infer that the predilection for mystic rites which may have been felt by the women connected with the initiates of Mithraism had to be satisfied outside of the proper Mithraic domain.

[29] Boissier, La Religion Romaine, I, 430; Cumont, The Mysteries of Mithra, p. 177.

[30] Cumont, The Mysteries of Mithra, p. 173.

## CHAPTER II

## SOME SPECIAL PHASES IN THE CONTENT OR HISTORY OF THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS

In connection with some of these religions very little will need to be added to what was said in the preceding chapter. Respecting the Eleusinian Mysteries it may properly be noticed that, while in the time of Herodotus initiation was limited to the Greeks, at a later period those of other nationalities who understood the Greek language and had the status of Roman citizens were eligible to admission when presenting themselves at Eleusis at the time of the annual celebration in September and October. Initiation was understood to establish a close bond with the divinities who

were specially commemorated, but it was not regarded as shutting one up to an exclusive scheme of worship. Among the divinities recognized, the benignant Earth Mother, Demeter, was central. The Maiden or Daughter, Kore (or Persephone), was prominent as an accessory to the role of Demeter. The statue of Iacchus was conspicuous in the solemn procession from Athens to Eleusis. According to one interpretation he represented a special form of Dionysos; according to another he was a divinity of subordinate rank.[1] Dionysos had a place in the Eleusinian rites, but not so much in his original Thracian character, as a patron of ecstasy, as in that of a fosterer of the arts and of agriculture. Of the two classes of initiates, the mystes and the epopts, it is conjectured that the

[1] The former is represented by Legge, The Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity, I, 40, and by W. S. Fox, in The Mythology of All Nations, I. 220; the latter is advocated by Foucart, Les Mystères d'Eleusis, p. 113.

latter were introduced by rites in which Dionysos was relatively prominent.[2] They represented an advanced grade of initiation, which was not esteemed necessary to salvation, and by a large proportion was not taken.

Orphism in the course of its development made connection, on the one hand, with the cult of Dionysos, and on the other with Greek philosophy. It was drawn to the former by a high appreciation of prophetical inspiration, and is presumed to have qualified to some extent the orgiastic feature attached to that cult in certain quarters. In respect of philosophy it affiliated especially with the Pythagorean teaching. Among the Mystery Religions it was relatively distinguished by its moral earnestness, though sharing in the common fault of an ultra cere-

[2] Foucart, pp. 452–454.

monialism.[3] While not given to the more extreme forms of ascetic practice, it adopted the ascetic point of view in that it radically disparaged the sense life as being incompatible with the true life of the spirit. In connection with this phase of its teaching it held a peculiar doctrine of original sin. For this a basis was found in the story of Dionysos-Zagreus. As the mythical narrative runs, Zagreus, the offspring of Zeus and Persephone, was attacked by the Titans at the instigation of the jealous Hera. They tore his body in pieces which they proceeded to devour. However, his heart remained intact, and this being brought to Zeus, he swallowed it or caused it to be swallowed by Semele. In the issue Zagreus was reborn under the name of Dionysos, and his murderers, the Titans, were cast into

[3] This view of the relative prominence of the moral factor in Orphism, though often expressed, is challenged by F. Legge, Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity, I, 145–147.

Tartarus. Since men, in respect of their bodies, were formed from the ashes of the Titans, they share in the guilt of their unholy predecessors, and need the virtue of purifying rites in order to be set free from the evil inheritance.[4] In harmony with the temper of their system the Orphists took a solemn view of future awards. They pictured grievous punishments for the wicked, though not representing them as endless. With Pythagoras they held that a single term of earthly life is not likely to accomplish the needed purification, and that accordingly a more or less prolonged series of reembodiments is to be expected. That the soul is intrinsica ly immortal they regarded as quite certain.

As has been indicated, the Phrygian cult of Cybele and Attis was charac-

[4] S. Reinach, Cultes, Mythes, et Religions, II, 59; Rohde, Psyche, II, 116ff.; Miss Harrison, Prolegomena to the Study of the Greek Religion, pp. 481–497.

terized by a very pronounced reference to the interests of vegetable and animal life. "In the attributes, functions, and form of the goddess, we can discern nothing celestial, solar, or lunar; she was and remained to the end a mother-goddess of the earth, a personal source of the life of fruits, beasts, and man."[5] Attis, associated with her as lover, husband, or son, figured by his death and resurrection the yearly decay and revival of vegetation. According to one version of his mythological history he was slain by a boar; according to another he died from self-mutilation. The great festival of Cybele and Attis occurred in early spring, beginning on the twenty-second of March and continuing for several days. The celebration was so conducted as to work up a great excitement in the participants. "In the midst of their orgies, and after wild dances, some of the worshipers

[5] Farnell, Greece and Babylon, p. 109.

voluntarily wounded themselves, and becoming intoxicated with the view of the blood, with which they besprinkled their altars, they believed they were uniting themselves with their divinity. Or else, arriving at a paroxysm of frenzy, they sacrificed their virility to the gods. These men became priests of Cybele and were called Galli."[6] Crude and abhorrent as these features may appear, they did not precipitate an early downfall of the strange religion. The worship of Cybele and Attis survived the establishment of Christianity by Constantine.[7]

The effective appeal which the Egyptian cult of Isis, Osiris, and Serapis was able to make to the peoples included in the Roman empire was due primarily, in no small degree, to the potent relation which these divinities

[6] Cumont, The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism, p. 50.
[7] Frazer, Adonis, Attis, Osiris, p. 250.

were represented to hold at once to the realm of life and to that of death. This double relation was figured mythologically in the account of Osiris which became imbedded in Egyptian traditions. As the story goes, Osiris, the offspring of an intrigue between the earth-god Seb and the sky-goddess Nut, fulfilled a beneficent vocation in promoting the cultivation of the soil and the advance of civilization. But he was at length exposed to the malicious plotting of his brother Set, who caused him to be inclosed in a chest and to be cast into the Nile. The chest was discovered by Isis, both sister and spouse of Osiris. It was not, however, so securely hidden by her, but that it passed under the hand of Set, who cut the inclosed body into fourteen pieces and scattered them widely. The faithful Isis spared no pains to gather the pieces. The body of the god was thus recom-

posed and he became installed as king of the dead. As a favorite divinity he had other roles assigned to him, among them that of a sun-god. His most vital association, however, was with the contrasted realms of life and death. In him was symbolized the ever-waning and continually reviving life of the earth. A kindred significance belonged to Isis in her association with him. On the score of her reputed sympathy and compassion she won a wide appreciation. In some instances she was idealized and universalized as a principle of divine wisdom. Plutarch interpreted her as standing for "that property of nature which is feminine or receptive of all production."[8] On the whole, she probably received in the general range of the Roman empire more warmth of devotion than any other Egyptian divinity. As for

[8] Of Isis and Osiris, § 53.

Serapis, he was essentially the product of a governmental scheme. The first of the Ptolemies (B. C. 323–285) instituted or forwarded his worship as one in which Greeks and Egyptians might unite. Not a few scholars have interpreted the name "Serapis" as simply a shortened form of "Osiris-Apis." Whether this is a true rendering or not, "Serapis" was quite commonly regarded as the equivalent of "Osiris." It was in this character that he was accepted by his Egyptian worshipers.

Like Vishnu and some others of the Hindu deities, the Persian god Mithra was one who made great advances in respect of relative position in the course of history. His recognition began, indeed, at a very ancient date, a place having been accorded him in the Vedic system where he appears under the name of Mitra.

As originally rated in the Zoroastrian system, he stood with the genii, twenty-eight in number, who were created by Ahura Mazda and were closely associated with the pure elements. In virtue of the fact that he was accounted the genius of the celestial light Mithra had from the start a certain kinship with his creator, but plainly was a being of subordinate rank. Formally the aspect of subordination may not have been canceled at any period, but practically it came in the end to be set aside. While Mithra continued to be assigned the office of mediator, to a large extent religious dependence was directed rather to him than to the higher and remoter deity. On the one hand, he attracted devotion by his friendly character. Men were solicited to look to him as a kindly and responsive benefactor. In this respect he bears comparison with Apollo and the Dioscuri of the Greeks.

On the other hand, he commanded allegiance as the embodiment of warrior might and virtue. He was reputed to be the guardian of the oath and a despiser of falsehood, and so was qualified to appeal to those who put a stanch moral ideal to the front. As compared with the gods of other Mysteries, he was more of a sky god, less a god of the underworld or realm of the dead. This, however, is not to be understood as denying that he figured as a succorer of the dead. Like the other divinities he was esteemed a source of procreation and fruitfulness and an agent of resurrection. It is seen, then, that Mithraism possessed features favorable to propagandism. With these were combined some that were not so favorable. The very scanty regard which it paid to women was in particular a serious limitation. Then, too, some of its rites could hardly have been agreeable

to the more cultured among either Greeks or Romans. This holds especially of the ceremony known as the *taurobolium*, in which the devotee, seeking purification, stood under a latticed platform and was drenched with the blood of a bull slain above. The like ceremony, it is true, is credited to the cult of Cybele; indeed, in its Mithraic use it is thought to have been borrowed from that source;[9] but in either connection it must have been the reverse of a recommendation to many people. As respects the extent to which Mithraism gained a footing in the Græco-Roman world there seems to be a tendency among scholarly investigators to question the warrant for the strong statements which have sometimes been made. Against Renan's representation that at one time this religion bade fair to dispute the

[9] Cumont, The Mysteries of Mithra, pp. 86, 87, 179–182; Legge, Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity, II, 258, 259.

ascendency of Christianity in the Roman empire, attention is called to the fact that the evidence fails to prove that Mithraism ever prevailed widely outside the cantonments of the Roman legions. Furthermore, as is indicated by the map which Cumont has prepared, we have the fact that it failed to strike root in most of the territory which could boast a high stage of culture. "Almost the entire domain of Hellenism," says Harnack, "was closed to it, and consequently Hellenism itself. Greece, Macedonia, Thrace, Bithynia, Asia (proconsular), the central provinces of Asia Minor (apart from Cappadocia), Syria, Palestine, and Egypt—none of these ever had any craving for the cult of Mithra. And these were the civilized countries by preeminence. They were closed to Mithra, and as he thus failed to get into touch at all, or at an early stage at any rate, with Hellenism, his

cult was condemned to the position of a barbarous conventicle. Now these were the very regions in which Christianity found an immediate and open welcome, the result being that the latter religion came at once into vital contact with Hellenism."[10] The historian adds that even in the West, where Mithraism had a relatively wide expansion, there is inadequate ground to conclude that it became "any real rival of Christianity."

The more significant features in the teaching of the Hermetic writings have already been indicated. Reference was made to their inclusion of both pantheistic and dualistic strains and to their tribute to the current sidereal mysticism. The character of the collection, made up as it was of about a score of independent parts, composed at

[10] The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries, II, 318–321.

different periods, naturally precluded strict uniformity in doctrine.[11] It has been noticed that Cumont assigns to this literature a less extensive role than that favored by some others. He says: "This recondite literature, often contradictory, was apparently developed between B. C. 50 and A. D. 150. It has considerable importance in relation to the diffusion throughout the Roman empire of certain doctrines of sidereal religion molded to suit Egyptian ideas. But it had only a secondary influence. It was not at Alexandria that this form of paganism was either produced or chiefly developed, but among the neighboring Semitic peoples."[12] One of the peculiar doctrines in this literature is thus stated: "The Master of eternity is the first God, the world is the second,

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[11] Reitzenstein, Poimandres, p. 190.

[12] Astrology and Religion Among the Greeks and Romans, pp. 76, 77.

and man is the third."[13] Another peculiar representation is that at first all the animals were hermaphrodite, as well as man, and that the division into sexes occurred at the same time for the human and the animal species.[14] A third peculiar notion concerns the mediatorial function of genii, or spirits of a non-human order. "The intelligible world," it is said, "is attached to God, the sensible world to the intelligible world, and through these two worlds the sun conducts the effluence of God that is creative energy. Around him are the eight spheres which are bound to him—the sphere of the fixed stars, the six spheres of the planets, and that which surrounds the earth. To these spheres the genii are bound, and to the genii men;

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[13] This occurs in the section entitled "Asklepios," which Lafaye contends must be located in the Neo-Platonic period, Histoire du Culte des Divinités d'Alexandrie, p. 85.

[14] Corpus Hermeticum, I, 18. (Mead, Thrice-Greatest Hermes, vol. ii, p. 12.)

and thus are all beings bound to God, who is the universal Father."[15] Among the higher elements in these writings are the worthy stress which is placed upon the goodness of God, the emphatic valuation of a true knowledge of God, and the clear enunciation of the doctrine of the soul's immortality.

[15] Kingford and Maitland, The Hermetic Works, The Virgin of the World, p. 106.

## CHAPTER III

## DISTINCTIVE POINTS IN WHICH THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS SHOW AGREEMENT OR CONTRAST WITH CHRISTIANITY

By Christianity in this connection is meant the Christian religion in its New Testament stage. It is perfectly conceivable that in the course of its development post-apostolic, and still more post-Constantinian, Christianity may have taken on characteristics akin to those of the Mystery Religions. The question of intrinsic or original resemblances or contrasts is obviously very different from the question of ultimate likeness or unlikeness.

Another discrimination is appropriately kept in mind. Agreement, even up to a conspicuous degree, is no

decisive proof of borrowing. In view of their kindred aims and objects, all religions are bound to exhibit resembling features; and where the religions are attached to similar planes of culture the resemblances cannot well escape being appreciable. Were one disposed to go in quest of points of likeness between Christianity and the classic religions of Greece and Rome, he could undoubtedly fashion a rather full catalogue. But no judicial mind would take his list as a demonstration that Christianity was originated by a process of selection from the pre-existing classic systems of faith and practice. The Mystery Religions in some parts of their content may seem to excel the classic systems in respect of affinity with Christian points of view, and so to be more probable sources of shaping influence. But this relative closeness of approach along certain lines is remote from being

a positive proof of effective working in the domain of primitive Christianity. So far as theory goes, it would involve no breach of logic to assume that New Testament Christianity, in rounding out its system in harmony with its fundamental postulates, was under compulsion to incorporate some features which were more or less characteristic of the Mystery Religions, and would have done so if those religions had been absolutely out of sight. Of course, too, in so far as these ethnic cults were themselves in process of development, the way lies open to the assumption that they may have been in some respects affected by Christian influence, which, if we may judge by the outcome, was decidedly the most potent leaven at work in the Græco-Roman world. It is not enough, then, to take note of the fact that a given Mystery was in existence at a certain pre-Christian

date. We need to know also whether the specific features which serve as a ground of comparison with Christianity were certainly pre-Christian.

One further discrimination is naturally suggested. The supposition that the Mystery Religions incorporated a certain body of truth akin to the content of Christianity is not necessarily regarded as a disparagement to the latter. What Clement of Alexandria said of Greek philosophy, namely, that it had the office of a schoolmaster to bring the Hellenic mind to Christ, might conceivably be said of the Mystery Religions. The primacy of Christianity is not denied by any agencies that prepare the ground for its own ultimate dominion.

As a matter of fact it is not improbable that the points of kinship between Christianity and the Mysteries served to facilitate the acceptance of the former by one and an-

other initiate, while yet the important points of contrast earned for the Mysteries the emphatic reprobation of the apostolic writers.

In an important outward respect the Mystery Religions undoubtedly resembled early Christianity. Making room for exceptions, we can say that as a class they were relatively detached from national associations and national control. Like the Christians, their votaries were gathered into voluntary brotherhoods wherein the chief bonds were a common faith and the use of common rites. Governmental patronage might further their advance, but independently of it they could thrive in any quarter where they were able to appeal successfully to individual men in quest of religious satisfaction.

It is also quite certain that the Mystery Religions were akin to Christianity in the earnest attempt which they made to minister to the hopes

of men in relation to the future life. In them the point of view of ancient Babylon and classic Greece was transcended, and a worthful immortality, as opposed to a vacant and pithless existence, was held in prospect. They fostered a vital impression of the greatness of eternal interests, and whatever artificialities may have entered into their scheme for safeguarding those interests, they undertook an office similar to that of Christianity in assuming to lead men into a way of security as respects the attainment of a priceless good.

Some of the sacred rites commonly in vogue in the Mysteries were analogous to the cardinal rites of the Christian Church. Confident judgment here is properly regarded as materially abridged by our very scanty information respecting the ceremonies which the Mysteries placed under the ban of secrecy. It is quite generally

believed, however, that they included transactions somewhat resembling the Christian rites of baptism and the eucharist.

In emphasizing heart-allegiance to a divine person, with whom redemptive offices were associated, the Mystery Religions were in line with a leading feature of Christianity. On this point, doubtless, they were not radically distinguished from other non-Christian faiths. Somewhat of the same element may be found in religions generally. But relatively they were distinguished by the great stress which they placed upon the close personal relation of the initiates with the saviour-gods in whose name the mystic rites were administered.

Mention might further be made of eschatological particulars in which the Mystery Religions stood close to Christian beliefs. Mithraism especially could be cited as presenting something

like equivalents for Christian representations respecting ascension, resurrection of the dead, visitation of the world by fire, judgment and sentencing of men, according to their deserts, to heaven or to hell. It would be rash, however to infer from the correspondence any direct borrowing of Mithraic materials by Christianity. It is very doubtful whether Mithraism had come into any real contact with the Christian domain when the New Testament was written.[1]

On the side of contrasts we have in the first place the fact that Christianity presented itself to the world as an open system, not a fenced-off mystery. It made no attempt to store up its treasures behind locked and bolted doors. Free access to its whole message was offered to every

[1] Cumont, The Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism, pp. xix, xx; Kennedy, St. Paul, and the Mystery Religions, pp. 114, 115; Harnack, The Mission and Expansion of Christianity, II, 318–321.

man. In so far as seclusion was sought for any of its rites it was at the dictate of a prudent desire to avoid profanation at the hands of a scornful and hostile multitude. It had nothing which was accounted as necessarily debarred to the sight of the public. Somewhat of a counter current was indeed started after a period. In some measure the point of view embodied in the secret cult of the Mysteries was entertained by the Alexandrian fathers in the third century, and it gained distinct recognition in the *Disciplina Arcana* in the fourth century.[2] But this was a development which was foreign to the Christianity of the first century. If we may judge from the implicit contradiction of it contained in the writings of Justin Martyr, it had not made appreciable headway at the middle of the second century.

[2] Anrich, Das antike Mysterienwesen, pp. 126ff.

In a second respect the Christianity of the New Testament age was widely distinguished from the Mystery Religions. As has been demonstrated a naturalistic basis was very prominent in them. The divinities in whom they were centered were primarily nature powers, the potencies of vegetable and animal life, and the experiences of death and resurrection celebrated in connection with them were symbolic of alternate decay and revival in the sphere of natural life. Herein they were at a great remove from Christianity, which set the divine power distinctly above the world, and asserted for its characteristic function the governance and direction of the spiritual and ethical. In this one feature alone it stood apart from them by an incalculable interval.

The extent to which the Mystery Religions appropriated astrology and sidereal mysticism in general may be

accounted a special expression of their naturalistic bent. All this was foreign to primitive Christianity. The New Testament, it is true, gives expression to the thought of a plurality of heavens; but the reference is purely incidental and subserves rather a rhetorical than a dogmatic purpose. No countenance whatever is given to the artificial scheme of the descent and ascent of souls, through diverse spheres, which came to be installed in the leading Mystery Religions.

The dominance of magic in this class of religions presents a further ground of contrast with original Christianity. Those, indeed, who allege that the apostolic writers conceived of the Christian rites, such as baptism and the eucharist, as working *ex opere operato* (or by the simple virtue of the ritual transaction) charge upon New Testament Christianity a species of magic. It may be that in the

technical definition magic stands for expedients counted strangely efficacious to force the divine will. But expedients which are considered to have the sanction of the divine will, in so far as an arbitrary efficacy is predicated of them, or they are assigned results quite outside their plane, may be said without abuse of language to have a magical aspect. The New Testament, then, if the given allegation is correct, cannot well be excused from admitting an element of magic. Our conviction, which we shall endeavor to sustain in subsequent pages, is that the allegation respecting the apostolic understanding of the Christian rites is essentially unfounded,[3] and that consequently New Testament Christianity is very decidedly contrasted with the Mystery Religions as respects giving countenance to magic. That a relative contrast is

[3] See Chapters V and VI.

to be affirmed, no reputable scholar, it is believed, would care to dispute. We notice, on the part of a New Testament critic who attributes to the apostolic writers the *ex opere operato* view of the sacraments, this judgment on the Mystery Religion as a whole: "It was weak intellectually and ethically; it had not cut itself off from mythology, and its ethic was lower than that of Seneca or of the philosophers in general."[4] No such statement, most assuredly, can be made respecting the New Testament. The cogency with which it sets the ethical point of view on high puts it in unmistakable contrast with the Mystery Religions. Even if one should suppose that it contains a magical element, he must grant that it does not permit that element to overshadow the moral after the mode and the measure of the ethnic systems.

[4] Kirsopp Lake, The Stewardship of Faith, p. 86.

Once more the Mystery Religions appear in contrast with original Christianity in their syncretistic bent, or readiness to make exchanges among themselves, and to acknowledge the essential identity of one with another. A consciousness of a very different order ruled in the Christian domain. There the idea of striking hands with any contemporary cult was radically discountenanced. The votaries of Christianity were firmly convinced that their religion was grounded in actual historic revelation, and had its essential content given in that revelation, so that it could not be made over for the accommodation of any party, without a most culpable recreancy to the truth. Doubtless the partisans of the Mysteries had a certain faith in the reality of the divinities whom they celebrated, and were far from admitting formally that their careers, as figured in the customary rites,

were purely mythological. But the available evidences for this faith were dim and scanty. A basis of assurance, like that contained in the living Christian tradition, was not attainable. In fact, a readiness to compound one cult with another was a half confession that all alike belonged to the sphere of symbolism, and were to be rated in their concrete representations as rather mythological than historical. Locally and temporarily these cults may have derived advantage from the policy of comity and accommodation, but they were not fitted to stand out against a religion which carried the assurance of historic foundations.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE QUESTION OF PAUL'S INDEBTEDNESS TO THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS FOR CHARACTERISTIC TERMS AND IDEAS

The propriety of distinguishing between the two forms of indebtedness is quite obvious. Scholars who deny that the apostle derived anything substantial, in the way of ideas, from the Mystery Religions are free to admit that he may have appropriated certain terms which came from that quarter. Thus Schweitzer remarks: "Paulinism and Hellenism have in common their religious terminology, but in respect of ideas, nothing. The apostle did not Hellenise Christianity. His conceptions are equally distinct from those of Greek philosophy and from those

of Mystery Religions. The affinities which have been alleged cannot stand an examination which takes account of their real essence and of the different way in which the ideas are conditioned in the two cases."[1] Much to the same effect are the words of Clemen. Referring to certain Pauline terms which admit of comparison with the language of the Mysteries, he says, "It is a mere question of forms of expression; in themselves they prove absolutely nothing as to an influence of the Mystery Religions on the Pauline theology."[2] The like point is urged by Ramsay in the broad statement: "The influence of Greek thought on Paul, though real, is all surely external. Hellenism never touches the life and essence of Paulinism which is fundamentally and absolutely Hebrew; but it does strongly affect the expres-

[1] Paul and His Interpreters, p. 238.

[2] Der Einfluss der Mysterienreligionen auf das älteste Christentum, pp. 29, 30.

sion of Paul's teaching."[3] The citation speaks of "Hellenism," but Ramsay makes it plain that he would not have put a less emphatic limitation on Paul's borrowing had the reference been specifically to the Mystery Religions. Of course it is theoretically possible that within limits Paul may have borrowed ideas as well as taken up forms of expression from the contemporary cults. What needs to be kept in mind is that the latter is no adequate proof of the former.

In respect of terms, it is less easy than might be imagined at first thought to determine the measure in which Paul's phraseology was under specific obligation to the Mysteries. Some of his characteristic terms may have been at hand in the current religio-philosophical dialect of the Greek-speaking world, so that there was no need of recourse to the Mystery cults to gain

[3] The Teachings of Paul in Terms of the Present Day, pp. 161, 162.

a suggestion of their employment. Others of them can be regarded as having an Hebraic foundation, as being suggested by forms of expression in the Hebrew Bible, such as the alert mind of the apostle could render, with or without assistance from the Septuagint version, into the Greek equivalents which his thought demanded. A fair application of these considerations, it is believed, will appreciably reduce the list of Pauline words which can confidently be referred to the Mystery Religions as their indubitable source. Among the words which come into discussion are the following: *μυστήριον*, *τέλειος*, *πνεῦμα* as distinguished both from *ψυχή* and *νοῦς*, *πνευματικός*, *ψυχικός*, *γνῶσις*, *ἀγνωσία*, *φωτίζειν*, *δόξα*, *εἰκών*, *μεταμορφοῦσθαι*, *σώζεσθαι*, *σωτηρία*, and *κύριος* as a distinctive title of Christ.

The term *μυστήριον* occurs upward of a dozen times in the Pauline Epis-

tles.[4] The thoroughly predominant sense in which it is used is that of plan, purpose, or prospective event which is hidden from ordinary research and needs to be made known by revelation or authoritative instruction. What at first sight might be taken as an exception occurs in Ephesians v. 32, where the term is applied to marriage. To bring this into line with the apostle's customary use we should need to think of the marriage union of man and woman as in a hidden way expressive or symbolical of the great truth of the union of Christ and the church. In the Septuagint, where the term occurs nearly as many times as in the Pauline Epistles, it has in like manner reference to plans and counsels which are, in fact, hidden, though not necessarily occult in nature. No reason is, there-

[4] Rom. xi. 25; 1 Cor. ii. 7, iv. 1, xiv. 2, xv. 51; Eph. i. 9, iii. 3, 4, 9, v. 32, vi. 19; Col. i. 26, 27, iv. 3; 1 Tim. iii. 16.

fore, apparent why the apostle should be regarded as beholden to the Mystery Religions so far as his general use of the term μυστήριον is concerned. That use had been naturalized before his day in Jewish circles.

With a somewhat better show of reason it may be urged that Paul's use of the word μυστήριον in connection with τέλειος (1 Cor. ii. 1–10), argues for his indebtedness to the Mysteries, since τέλειος was a technical term for designating the standing of an initiate. This basis, however, is too fragile to support a positive conclusion. To whatever extent τέλειος may have been installed in the dialect of the Mysteries prior to Paul's day, there is good reason to believe that it was used outside of them in much the same sense in which it was used by him, namely, to designate maturity or relative perfection, as opposed to an initial stage of develop-

ment. It occurs in that sense with Philo,[5] an older contemporary of Paul, and the same use is very closely approached in the Septuagint.[6] If the apostle needed to borrow from antecedent usage he could easily do so without recourse to the Mystery Religions. The most that can rightly be claimed for that source is contained in these words of a writer whose painstaking review of the subject renders excellent service: "In view of the earlier associations of the communities which Paul addresses, we cannot certainly rule out the suggestion that the Mystery-atmosphere is to some extent present, although plainly no conclusion can be drawn from this term as to Paul's personal attitude toward the Mystery conceptions."[7]

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[5] Opera, Graece et Latine, Erlangen, vol. i, pp. 302, 324; English translation by Yonge, Allegories of the Sacred Laws, Book iii, §§ xxxiii, xlvii, xlviii.

[6] 1 Chron. xxv. 8.

[7] Kennedy, St. Paul and the Mystery Religions, pp. 134, 135.

A basis for Paul's psychological terms is largely supplied by the Old Testament. His σάρξ, ψυχή, and πνεύμα correspond in a general way to the Hebrew *basar*, *nephesh*, and *ruach*. In either case the third term has a double connotation. It may denote either the divine Spirit which replenishes man with a higher life, or it may signify the finite human spirit. In the latter sense it is not very clearly and uniformly distinguished from the second factor, either in the Pauline or the Old Testament writings. We may say that *spirit* is the preferred term where there is a wish to emphasize the life of man in its Godward relations, whereas *soul* is employed when the reference is simply to the center of man's personal life; but in some instances the soul seems to be taken as equivalent to man's supersensuous being without restriction as to its relations. Peculi-

arities of the Pauline terminology are the use of the term σάρξ in opposition to moral good and the sharp antithesis which is made between the adjective terms ψυχικός and πνευματικός, the one being applied to man as predominantly a subject of the earthly sense life, and the other describing him as he is under the rule of the spiritual and divine. With the latter term νοῦς is associated so far as opposition to the flesh is concerned (Rom. vii. 23, 25); but it is in a measure distinguished from the πνεῦμα since it is the seat especially of the reflective intelligence, and gives place to the other term when the reference is to ecstatic fellowship with God (1 Cor. xiv. 14, 15). In these peculiarities the apostle represents an appreciable development beyond the Old Testament. That contains, it is true, a strong contrast between flesh and spirit, but it is the contrast between the feebleness

and transitoriness of man's physical frame and the everlasting might of the divine Spirit, not the ethical contrast which is set forth in the Pauline Epistles. On what antecedents did Paul base his special usage? Not unequivocally on Hellenic antecedents, for these do not present an exact counterpart. In Orphism, in the Platonic philosophy, and in some other Hellenic domains, we doubtless find the sense life and the life of the spirit strongly opposed. But here matter is made intrinsically unfriendly to spirit, so that the embodied life is necessarily regarded as at a disadvantage in comparison with the disembodied. This is remote from Paul's standpoint. With him the body is a subject for sanctification and glorification, and holds a permanent place in the ideal for man. Consequently, it is made perfectly plain that he uses flesh (σάρξ) in a pregnant sense, denoting by it rather the unre-

newed man, who is so easily led captive by fleshly impulses, than the material substance as such. His usage is neither Hebrew nor Hellenic. It may be indebted for suggestions to both, but prudent scholarship will hesitate to deny its individualistic character and will be slow to force it to wear a foreign badge. Paul's opposition between σάρξ and πνεῦμα is more Pauline than anything else. It does not conform to any Hellenic pattern whether inside or outside the Mysteries. How is it with the other phase of his terminology which lacks a distinct Old Testament basis, the antithesis between ψυχικός and πνευματικός? The latter term was very likely well naturalized in the Mysteries, being accounted especially appropriate to one who had reached the goal of ecstatic union with the divinity. On the other hand, there seems to be a serious lack of evidence

that in the terminology of the Mysteries the formal antithesis between ψυχικός and πνευματικός, in the Pauline sense, was current. Its appearance in Gnosticism proves nothing to the contrary, for the Pauline writings were one of the sources of Gnosticism as known to us. We conclude, then, that in respect of psychological terms Paul is not shown to have been, in any notable degree, a borrower from the Mystery Religions. He derived suggestions from both the Hebrew and the Hellenic domains. He was not a servile copyist of any set of antecedents. The evidence of his indebtedness specifically to the Mysteries is tenuous and conjectural.[8]

[8] We add judgments of H. W. Robinson and E. D. Burton. The former says: "Paul, in spite of the use of some Greek terms ('inner man,' 'mind,' 'conscience'), remains psychologically what he calls himself, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; the advances he makes on the conceptions of the Old Testament are a natural Jewish development, whilst their originality can be shown as compared with Palestinian Judaism, as well as with the Hellenistic thought of Alexandria. His modifications of Jewish thought are primarily due to his personal experience, and such Hellenistic influences as were inevitable in his period were unconsciously imbibed by Paul

The stress placed upon revelation as a source of the higher and more efficacious knowledge, in both the Pauline writings and the Mystery Religions, involves a certain kinship in their use of such terms as γνῶσις and its opposite ἀγνωσία. The similar point of view would of necessity involve a similar use of terms. Moreover, it is to be observed that as a student of the literature of the Old Testament, Paul was definitely introduced to the representation of a knowledge or wisdom which comes by the gift of the divine Spirit.[9] Once more, it is not

and subordinated or assimilated to his Jewish psychology" (The Christian Doctrine of Man, p. 104). Burton notices that the psychological usage of the Hermetic writings is rather broadly contrasted with that of Paul. He also contends that the significance which the apostle attached to the σάρξ is not to be derived from any known Hellenic antecedents. "The flesh that makes for evil," he says, "is not the body or matter as such, but an inherited impulse to evil. . . . The whole evidence of the Synoptical Gospels tends to confirm the impression gained from the study of Paul, that his usage is not as a whole a reflection of common usage in his day, but to an important extent the result either of exceptional influences or his own thinking" (American Journal of Theology, October, 1916, pp. 550, 586, 589).

[9] Hosea, ii. 20, v. 4; Isa. xi. 2; Prov. ii. 5; 1 Kings, x. 24; Job, xxxii. 8; Psa. cxix. 144.

to be overlooked that in Paul's teaching there is a special phase, in that it sets forth knowledge as profoundly conditioned ethically, as indeed being of no worth at all apart from love. These facts may well modify a dogmatic impulse to translate the similarities into certain evidence of borrowing from the ethnic systems. The possibility that the apostle was influenced in this part of his vocabulary by the atmosphere of the Mysteries may be admitted, but the warrant for a confident assumption is not apparent. As for the Hermetic literature, which is alleged to present in particular parallels to the Pauline use of the terms in question, the date of its composition and collection leaves room for the supposition that through the channel of Gnosticism it may have appropriated at one point or another a tinge of Pauline phraseology.

The most important of the remain-

ing terms which come into consideration is κύριος. Little occasion exists for a specific dealing with φωτίζειν, δόξα, εἰκών, μεταμορφοῦσθαι, σώζεσθαι, and σωτηρία. Plain suggestions of all of them except μεταμορφοῦσθαι are contained in the Old Testament, and besides they are so far congenial to religious discourse generally that the apostle might reasonably be expected to employ them or closely resembling terms. For the use of μεταμορφοῦσθαι the occasion was not quite so obvious, though it is perfectly conceivable that the apostolic thinker, having in mind the reaching of a supernatural goal through supernatural means, might naturally have had recourse to the term. An acquaintance with the Mysteries could doubtless have introduced him to it, though not fully in his sense. "In the Mystery Religions the chief stress is laid upon a quasi-magical transmutation of essence. The

nature of Paul's conception of the πνεῦμα sets in the foreground the moral significance of the process."[10]

In connection with κύριος (Lord) the claim is made that its application to Jesus could not have been initiated on the basis of Old Testament precedent or Old Testament training, since in that sphere the monotheistic point of view stood in the way of admitting the ascription of lordship to any other than Jehovah; that the title was current in the Mysteries as the designation of the divinity who was acknowledged as the head of the mystic community; that consequently it was taken from this quarter and installed in its Christian use by the election of Paul or by his acquiescence in the choice of his Gentile converts.[11] The claim seems plausible. There are some considerations, however, which may

[10] Kennedy, St. Paul and the Mystery Religions, p. 183.

[11] See in particular Bousset, Geschichte des Christusglaubens von den Angfängen des Christentums bis Irenæus.

serve to qualify the occasion to stress the dominating influence of the Mysteries in the matter. Even in the Old Testament a suggestion is given of one who stands as Lord (κύριος in the Septuagint) alongside of the Lord Jehovah (Psa. cx. 1); and the text bearing this suggestion was given a certain prominence through its citation by Jesus in his encounter with the Pharisees (Matt. xxii. 45; Luke xx. 44). Furthermore the antecedent thought of the Messiah in at least a portion of the Jewish domain, as affirming of him a distinctly superhuman rank,[12] was adapted to supplement the suggestion furnished by the psalmist's words, and to point to the Messiah as a fit subject for the name of κύριος. An appreciable Jewish basis was thus supplied for applying this name to the transcendent person whom the prim-

[12] Book of Enoch, chapters xxxvii–lxxi; Fourth Book of Ezra. vii, xiii, xiv.

itive Christian faith acknowledged as the Messiah. In harmony with the supposition that this Judaic ground was influential is the fact of the early currency among the Christians of the Aramaic phrase *maranatha*, "the Lord cometh."[13] It is not to be overlooked also that in the Græco-Roman world of Paul's day the title κύριος had other associations than those given it in connection with the Mysteries. By the time the apostle began to pen his epistles, the custom, which was pronounced from the age of Domitian, was in all probability under way, the custom namely of dignifying the emperor with the title of κύριος. Is it to be supposed that this use of the title would have recommended it to Paul or to any other contemporary Christian? Our conviction is that it must have acted as the very opposite

[13] Compare E. F. Scott, The Beginnings of the Church, pp. 95–108; J. H. Ropes, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James, p. 34.

of a recommendation. No less is it our conviction that the employment of the title in the Mysteries must have served as the reverse of a motive for its adoption. Some of Paul's converts may have heard it in that connection; but what we know of the apostle's attitude toward contemporary Gentilism leads us to suppose that he advised those who took Christ as their Master to clear their minds completely of all the fancies and fables of their old faith. They were instructed to rate these as a bygone and to account themselves new creatures in Christ Jesus. If the apostle took over from them a title which had functioned in their old paganism, it was not in any degree because it had so functioned. It was, rather, because he, and with him contemporary Christians, had a conception of Christ which that title matched better than any other in the available vocabulary. It at once gave

expression to the transcendent dignity and authority which they wished to ascribe to Christ, and was in harmony with their intention to conserve a certain preeminence to the Father. Antecedent Gentile usage did not give them the motive for adopting the title; rather their ruling conception of Christ constrained them to adopt the title in spite of its association with crude imperial gods or fabled divinities.

In point of theory we freely admit the probability that Paul's religious vocabulary was influenced by his Hellenic environment, and more specifically by the Mystery Religions in so far as they were a conspicuous factor in that environment. But other antecedents were influential with the apostle, and there are abundant reasons for caution against attributing too great a role to the special factor. A very exaggerated impression may be formed, as to the degree in which the

Mystery Religions impinged upon the mind of Paul, by scouring the Græco-Roman world and gathering up, through a period of several centuries, all the phrases having a semblance of Pauline usage. Such a compacting process easily lends itself to an overgrown impression. It is our conviction that the Mystery Religions did not bulk so large in the apostle's contemplation as some scholars have imagined. Indeed, there is room for the suspicion that in respect of their relative prevalence and influence in the antique world generally recent judgment has been inclined to an overestimate; certainly the limited extent to which they figure in patristic literature does not testify to a very vital conception of their importance. We do not say that the patristic measure was the true one, but simply raise the question whether somewhat of a tendency to an overdrawn estimate

may not have gained currency in recent scholarship. Doubtless the fusion of Greek and Oriental constituents, following the conquests of Alexander, marked an important era in the history of religion. But it is quite possible to take too little account of the compromising features which limited the acceptability of any specific product of the fusion in the sphere both of Hellenic culture and of Jewish religious training.

It has been indicated that the measure of Paul's indebtedness to the Mystery Religions for his terms is by no means a certain index of his obligations for characteristic ideas. He might very well have been too rich in ideas to need to borrow at all, while yet he was measurably dependent for the terms in which he might give the ideas appropriate and effective expression.

Two things invite to skepticism in relation to the supposition that Paul owed any appreciable debt to the Mystery Religions as respects his fundamental ideas. In the first place, the sphere of Christian truth stood for him as the sphere of light and reality over against the darkness, foolishness, and vanity of Gentile religion. Emphatic declarations in his epistles make it evident that he never could have dreamed of going into the latter domain for any part of his theological furnishing.[14] The supposition of conscious recourse to that province is simply preposterous.

In the second place, whatever resemblances can be traced between Paul's characteristic ideas and various phases in the scheme of the Mysteries, they differ in fact so widely that ample proof is given that he did not

[14] Rom. 1. 21ff., iii. 1, 2; 1 Cor. i. 21, iii. 19; Gal. iv. 8, 9; Eph. v. 8; 1 Thess. iv. 5.

either consciously or unconsciously take over into his own system any ruling conceptions from the latter. Much of what was said in the preceding chapter on similarities and contrasts is pertinent here. The similarities of Pauline representations to those of the Mystery cults are explicable apart from any supposition of borrowing, and they are accompanied by very pronounced contrasts. The given cults, it is admitted, made much of a future and immortal life. But how could Paul, as a believer in the Jesus who taught the doctrine of a vital immortality and who rose from the dead, fail to magnify this theme? Jesus gave the incomparable credential of immortality in his warmly colored and penetrating exposition of the Fatherhood of God and his ideal illustration of the filial relation to him. Life and immortality were brought to light in him by the very type of religious

consciousness which he manifested and with which he inspired his followers. Paul was true to a dominant note in his Master's teaching when he spoke of the inward attestation of sonship toward God, and argued, "If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." With this point of view, intrinsic to the Gospel, in his possession, what need had he to kindle the torch of his faith at the lesser flame of the Mysteries? Their dramatic expedients for working up the hope of a blessed hereafter were paltry and inefficacious compared with the grounds of confidence laid for him in the vital message and triumphant experiences of Him on whom he believed.

A second point of resemblance is admitted. The Mystery Religions gave considerable scope to the idea of an intimate relation between the initiate and the divinity in whose name the

mystic rites were celebrated. But what need had Paul to draw on them for a lively conception of the privilege of personal communion with his Lord? His individual experiences were infinitely more potent than any suggestions which could come from that quarter. As often as he thought of the way in which he had been met on the Damascus road he was overwhelmed with a sense of the unmerited grace which had been visited upon himself. That transforming revelation constituted the initial event in a chain of experiences which magnified the love of God in Christ and brought his soul into complete captivity. He felt that living or dying he was the Lord's and could entertain no other purpose but the fulfillment of his perfect will. Out of this type of personal realization he sketched the believer's relation to Christ. The notion that he needed to go to the

Mysteries for any part of the ideal is nothing less than grotesque.

Over against these points of similarity, and any others that might be mentioned, fundamental contrasts come into the account. Reference has been made to the naturalistic basis in the Mystery Religions and to the overplus of magic which they harbored. On the score of these features it is impossible to bring them into line with the Pauline theory of redemption. What ground of comparison is there between the Mystery scheme, with its gods who personify in their death and return to life the vicissitudes of vegetable and animal life, and the divine economy for recovering sinners which Paul pictures as the harmonious combination of righteousness and grace? Nothing comparable to Paul's argument in the third chapter of the epistle to the Romans is to be found in the Mys-

teries. Nothing on the plane of the moral fellowship which he postulated between the believer and the Crucified One is discoverable in their melodramatic expedients. The cross as he understood it, with its profound moral significance both for God and for man, has no counterpart there. Anyone who can discover in their bizarre and variegated mythology an equivalent for the Pauline doctrine of redemption must be gifted with peculiar eyesight. Paul manifestly discovered nothing of the sort. His declaration that the message of redemption preached by himself was foolishness to the Gentiles (1 Cor. i. 23) is a decisive evidence that he was not aware that Greek, or Græco-Oriental, theory had in any wise prepared the way for the Christian doctrine of salvation through Christ.[15]

[15] Compare Burton S. Easton, The Pauline Theology and Hellenism in The American Journal of Theology, July, 1917, pp. 373–376.

# CHAPTER V

## THE QUESTION OF PAUL'S INDEBTEDNESS TO THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS FOR HIS CONCEPTIONS OF BAPTISM AND THE EUCHARIST

A WRITER on New Testament themes has expressed the opinion that the high sacramental theory of baptism and the eucharist, the theory that these rites work *ex opere operato* (or in the simple virtue of their ritual performances),[1] was held by Paul, and was central in the Primitive Christianity to which the Roman empire began to be converted.[2]

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[1] Roman Catholic usage, which gave currency to the phrase *ex opere operato*, clearly assigns it this sense. For the main evidences, the author's Sacerdotalism in the Nineteenth Century, pp. 222–224, may be consulted.

[2] K. Lake, The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul, pp. 213–215, 385–390.

In dissenting from this opinion we may claim at the outset that it is not enforced by any compelling verdict of scholarship. The writer who penned it thinks, indeed, that such a verdict will soon be installed, but he admits "that many critics of the highest standing among Protestant theologians would deny the soundness of the views enunciated, and maintain that primitive Christianity was not centrally sacramental." He might have added that these critics by no means wear a common badge as respects affiliation with conservatism or radicalism, but belong to diverse schools. We choose to believe that their judgment will not so readily give way as the writer supposes before the discovery that high sacramental views were current, to some extent, in contemporary Gentilism. Proof that such views were present in the field where primitive Christianity wrought

obviously falls very far short of a demonstration that they were appropriated and given a central place in primitive Christianity.

In respect of baptism, it is to be noticed, in the first place, that neither Paul nor any other New Testament writer has expressed the conviction that it works regeneration or any other spiritual benefit in purely passive subjects. The pronounced token of high sacramentalism, which emerged subsequently in the theory of baptism as applied to infant subjects, nowhere appears in the apostolic literature, that literature making no reference at least of a direct and unequivocal character, to infant baptism. No appeal can be made to this topic for convicting Paul of holding the magical or *ex opere operato* theory of the sacrament. Possibly it may be thought that in his reference to baptism for the dead (1 Cor. xv. 29)

the apostle has evinced a belief in the efficacy of the rite for purely passive subjects. But that is no warrantable conclusion. If Paul, for argumentative effect, assumed the standpoint of the objectors whom he wished to convince—a thing most probable, as will be seen shortly—then he is not placed on record as believing that baptism for the dead has any efficacy whatever. In any case it is not in evidence that he believed that the dead can be benefited unconditionally by baptism performed upon the living in their behalf. Nothing, therefore, in the extant records justifies the assumption that he considered the rite efficacious for purely passive subjects.

Coming to more positive grounds of inference, we are permitted to affirm that the ascription of the high sacramental conception of baptism to Paul is incongruous with declarations in which he positively disparages the

ceremonial point of view. Nothing less than this disparagement is involved in the style of his references to circumcision. He depreciates this rite, not on the ground that it has been superseded by a more efficacious rite, but on the ground that it belongs to an external range and bears no comparison in respect of religious value with interior or spiritual states or transactions. This is plainly the import of such sentences as the following: "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but the keeping of the commandments of God." "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything,

nor uncircumcision, but faith working through love. . . . Neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."[3] The common characteristic of these passages is the antipathy which they reveal to rating the external and ceremonial on anything like a parity with the interior and spiritual. If the apostle who penned them conceived of baptism as profoundly efficacious in its own virtue as a ritual transaction, he must have been an adept in self-contradiction. And these passages do not stand alone, but are in line with an ample series of instructions which powerfully stress the incomparable and unqualified necessity of those interior dispositions which came to manifestation in Christ. It is certainly not the voice of the ceremonialist that we hear in words like these: "If any man hath not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. . . .

[3] Rom. ii. 28, 29; 1 Cor. vii. 19; Gal. v. 6, vi. 15.

As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God."[4] "If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing." "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me."[5] Quite in harmony with this supreme stress on an interior life realized through heart appropriation of the gospel message is the apostle's characterization of his vocation. "Christ sent me," he says, "not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (1 Cor. i. 17). Had he attached to baptism the virtue which is ascribed to it in the high sacramental theory, he would nat-

[4] Rom. viii. 9, 14; 1 Cor. xiii. 3.
[5] Gal. ii. 20.

urally have had very little inclination to mention what must have seemed a strange and injurious limitation of his calling.

The standpoint of Paul, as involving a limited efficacy of baptism, is indicated very distinctly by the overwhelming emphasis which he places upon faith as the condition of justification. It is a foremost thesis with him that justification is attained by faith.[6] "The gospel," he declares, "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. . . . For therein is revealed a righteousness of God by faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith." "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." The Spirit is received by "the hearing of faith," and it is by the instrumentality of faith that Christ is made to dwell in the heart.[7]

[6] Rom. iii. 21, 22, 28, iv. 3, 5, v. 1, ix. 30, 32; Gal. iii. 11, 24; Eph. ii. 8.

[7] Rom. i. 16, 17, x. 10; Gal. iii. 2; Eph. iii. 17.

Now, for one who makes so much of the primacy and necessity of faith in the appropriation of salvation, what in plain logic can be the office of baptism? Is it conceivable that it can be regarded as having any virtue whatever independently of antecedent and accompanying faith? Can it possibly be accounted anything more than a fitting accessory to faith as giving to it open manifestation and attesting the wish and the will of its subject to be numbered with Christian believers? These questions, we are confident, must be answered in the negative. Either Paul was glaringly illogical, or he must have rated baptism as distinctly secondary to such a spiritual condition as faith, and must have regarded it as totally destitute of saving efficacy in the absence of that indispensable condition. That it is not necessary to choose the former alternative will appear from a

glance at the few references to baptism which occur in the Pauline Epistles.

It is noticeable that in the great dogmatic epistle to the Romans the subject of baptism is broached in but a single instance, and that in this instance the motive for its introduction is homiletical rather than dogmatic. The passage reads, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein? Or are ye ignorant that all ye who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death. . . . Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. vi. 1–4, 11). The motive underlying the passage, as we have said, is plainly homiletical. Paul wishes to give his readers a vivid impression of the inconsistency into

which they would fall if they should make light of sin after undergoing the rite in which purification from sin, or death to sin, was figured. Not what baptism in its own virtue effected, but what it was understood to represent or symbolize, was the pertinent point of view. At least, it is perfectly gratuitous to attach any larger sense to the passage. The Epistle to the Romans affords no proper ground for charging that the apostle ran into radical self-contradiction by assuming an outward ceremony intrinsically efficacious or working *ex opere operato*.

It has been observed by one or another reviewer that Paul's representation of burial with Christ in baptism has a certain analogy to the assumption in the Mystery Religions that the initiate, in the performance of the ritual, in some sort repeats the experience of the god who is being commemorated. The analogy is not

to be denied. But that Paul derived from his knowledge of the Mysteries an incentive to the symbolism in question strikes us as problematical. A mind so alert as that of the apostle, and so dominated with the thought and feeling of mystical union with Christ, might easily have gravitated, without exterior impulsion, into the employment of the given baptismal figure. In any event, there is the scantiest sort of occasion to imagine that he took over a notion of ceremonial efficacy that is glaringly contradictory to his explicit teachings.

If the context of the statement relative to baptism in the Epistle to the Romans negatives the demand for a high sacramental theory, the same is true of the text in Galatians. We read here: "Ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (iii. 26, 27).

The first of these sentences makes faith the condition of sonship, and thus assigns to it the primacy which it has customarily in the apostle's discourse. Is it to be supposed that this function of faith is ignored in the following sentence, and that baptism, as a mere sacramental performance, is counted efficacious for the putting on of Christ? Let any one, who can, believe the apostle guilty of such a foolish collocation of contradictory statements. The gist of his discourse is clear enough. He makes the legal dispensation and the dispensation of grace in Christ antithetic, the one being associated with servitude and the other with freedom. He reminds the Galatians that they are no longer in the estate of servitude, but through faith in Christ have become sons of God. To clinch this point of view he reminds them of their public act in receiving baptism,

as being an acknowledgment that they belonged to the Christ who stood for the dispensation of grace and freedom, and so could not consistently locate themselves under the old legal dispensation. The point of emphasis is not what baptism in its own virtue accomplishes, but the relation of union with Christ which baptism, where the requisite spiritual conditions are fulfilled, attests.

Such general references to baptism as are contained in 1 Cor. vi. 11, Col. ii. 12, and Eph. v. 26 leave room for the limitations upon the efficacy of baptism which are logically implied in the fundamental teachings of Paul. Relative to the Ephesian text Kennedy remarks: "The notion of a baptism of the ἐκκλησία is plainly metaphorical. The most notable feature in the passage is the phrase ἐν ῥήματι, which no doubt must be interpreted, as in Romans x. 8, 17, of the proclamation

of the gospel. This accords with the place given to faith in the other passages on baptism which we have examined."[8]

The peculiar remark on baptism for the dead, 1 Cor. xv. 29, remains to be considered. Here the comments of Meyer cover so well the essential points that we cannot do better than to reproduce his principal statements. "That a baptism of such a kind *effected* anything," he says, "was assuredly a thought foreign to the apostle. He wished to point out the *subjective* absurdity of the procedure in the case assumed. . . . The custom propagated and maintained itself afterward only among heretical sects, in particular among the Cerinthians and among the Marcionites. . . . The usual objection, that Paul could not have employed for his purpose at all, or at

[8] St. Paul and the Mystery Religions, p. 252.

least not without adding some censure, such an abuse founded on the belief in a magical power of baptism, is not conclusive, for Paul may be arguing *ex concesso*, and hence may allow the relation of the matter to evangelical faith to remain undetermined in the meantime, seeing that it does not belong to the proper subject of his present discourse. The abuse must afterward have been condemned by apostolic teachers (hence it maintained itself only among heretics), and no doubt Paul too aided in the work of its removal."[9] Of course no direct proof exists that Paul disapproved of baptism for the dead. But the indirect evidence has no little cogency. The absence of any trace of the custom in Catholic Christendom in post-apostolic times speaks decidedly for the conclusion that it could not have

[9] Critical and Exegetical Handbook on the Epistles to the Corinthians, pp. 364, 365.

enjoyed the sanction of the apostle who surpassed all others in the extent of his field of labor. If we conjoin with this consideration the anti-ceremonial trend of a great part of Paul's teaching, the reasonable inference is that the Corinthian text is to be construed as rather shrewdly employed to confound opponents than as representative of the apostle's own belief.[10]

In arguing against the indictment of the apostle as a propagator of the high sacramental theory of baptism, it is not our intention to claim that it had precisely the same significance for him which it has for the great body of Protestant believers under the usual conditions in modern

[10] Compare Clemen, Primitive Christianity and its Non-Jewish Sources, p. 219. The above exposition proceeds on the supposition that proxy baptism is referred to in 1 Cor. xv. 29. It is perhaps incumbent on us to notice that this interpretation is not universally accepted. Robertson and Plummer, for instance, suggest that persons who were persuaded to accept baptism out of affection for friends who had died as Christians might reasonably be designated as "those who receive baptism in behalf of the dead" (International Critical Commentary).

times. In the apostolic era baptism marked a great crisis in the life of the convert. It often, if not, indeed, customarily, followed closely upon the exercise of faith in Christ. It thus had a vital importance as a completing act in the appropriation of Christianity. It stamped the convert as an initiate into a new world, and doubtless was frequently attended by an increment of the new life. Under such conditions it was naturally given a somewhat closer association with the positive beginning of the Christian life than obtains in case of subjects who have grown up in Christian communities. That Paul's estimate of baptism was in some degree affected by the special conditions it is not at all necessary to deny. What is to be denied is that he estimated baptism after the mode of a pronounced sacramentalism, attaching to it an independent virtue, or regarding it as

working the renewal of its subjects *ex opere operato*.

Paul refers directly to the eucharist in only two passages—1 Cor. x. 16–21, xi. 20–34. An indirect reference has been supposed by some to be contained in 1 Cor. x. 3, 4. In the first mentioned passage he styles the cup which is blessed a communion of the blood of Christ, and the bread which is broken a communion of the body of Christ, and reprobates the notion that it is permissible for Christians who share in this order of communion to enter into communion with pagan altars and divinities by knowingly eating of things which have been offered to idols. In the second of the passages mentioned he rebukes certain disorders which had invaded the sacred feast as observed by the Corinthians, repeats the words ascribed to Jesus in connection with the Last

Supper, emphasizes the memorial character of the eucharistic rite as showing forth the Lord's death till he comes, and warns against sacrilege by declaring, "whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." In the remaining passage reference is made to the experience of Israel in the wilderness, where as partakers of the manna they all did eat the same spiritual meat, and as refreshed by the water gushing from the rock they drank of the same spiritual drink, the rock which followed them being Christ. In these three passages is contained all the evidence which can be adduced from the writings of Paul in an attempt to convict him of borrowing from the Mystery Religions the conception of a real eating of the body and a real drinking of the blood of Christ.

Against the supposition of such bor-

rowing it can be urged, in the first place, that there are legitimate grounds of doubt as to the presence in the contemporary Mysteries of that which is supposed to have been borrowed. Accounts of sacramental meals as parts of the mystic program are confessedly very scanty.[11] According to Farnell there is no sign that the initiated at Eleusis believed that they were partaking through food of the divine substance of their divinity, and though this conception appears elsewhere sporadically in ancient ritual, "it is by no means so frequent that we could assume it in any given case without evidence."[12] "The alleged instances," says Moffatt, "of worshipers in the cults sharing in the life of the deity by partaking of him in a meal are distant, late, and du-

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[11] Dieterich, Eine Mithrasliturgie, pp. 102ff.; Reitzenstein, Die Hellenistische Mysterienreligionen.

[12] The Cults of the Greek States, III, 196.

bious."[13] Carl Clemen remarks that we hear of sacred meals in the most varied Mysteries, but have no information about the partaking in them of the divinity.[14] Percy Gardner repudiates the supposition that Paul can properly be placed on a level with those who have held to the notion of a real eating of the divinity, and adds, "In fact, in his time we cannot trace in any of the more respectable forms of heathen religion a survival of the practice of eating the deity.[15] It would seem, then, that a main premise is wanting for the establishment of the conclusion that Paul took over from the Mystery Religions a thoroughly realistic view and applied it to the eucharistic feast. Distinct proof fails to appear that this view was at hand, at least in such form and

[13] The Expositor, July, 1913.

[14] Der Einfluss der Mysterienreligionen auf das älteste Christentum, p. 55.

[15] The Religious Experience of St. Paul, p. 121.

connection as would have been likely to exercise any attraction upon the mind of the apostle. That he should have been favorably impressed by a Dionysiac orgy—supposing such a rite to have been in vogue in his neighborhood—is not conceivable.[16]

In the second place, as was illustrated at some length in connection with the topic of baptism, the predominant emphasis which Paul placed upon the spiritual conditions of religious benefits and attainments makes it incredible that he could have held the alleged realistic view of the eucharist. He who spoke of Christ as dwelling in the heart by faith, who declared that any eating which is not of faith

[16] In the cult of Osiris some sort of recognition may have been given to a partaking of the god (A. Moret, Kings and Gods of Egypt, pp. 97, 98). But it is difficult to conceive that instructed Egyptians could have understood in a literal sense the vague reference to this function in their highly symbolical ritual. As for those within the pale of Christian teaching, it is not credible that they would be inclined to award any favorable attention to a reference of this kind in a cult which they could but regard as based in extravagant allegory, magic, and mythology.

works condemnation, who affirmed that the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, who made bold to say that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God—is it to be supposed that this man thought that Christ could be savingly appropriated by the mere physical act of eating and drinking physical elements? Well may any sober-minded person hesitate to charge the apostle with such superficiality and self-contradiction.

In the third place, it is to be noticed that no one of the three passages mentioned contains a compelling ground for imputing to Paul the crass realistic view of the eucharist. There is very slight occasion to take the words of 1 Cor. x. 3, 4 in a realistic sense, scarcely more occasion to do so than to conclude that those who are spoken of by the psalmist as

being shepherded and made to lie down in green pastures must be construed as literal sheep which divided their time between cropping grass and reclining on the ground. As a Jew, or simply as a member of the human race, Paul was not necessarily an utter stranger to metaphorical and parabolic speech. It is quite gratuitous, if not worse, to suppose that he meant to identify Christ with the manna or the rock. The manna and the water gushing from the rock were spiritual meat and drink to the Israelites—to those who were sufficiently responsive to their import—as attesting the grace and compassion of God whereof Christ may be conceived as the medium or channel. That they were unconditionally spiritual meat and drink is not said; rather the contrary is intimated by the sequel, for most of the participants fell under the displeasure of God and were over-

thrown in the wilderness. There is no disclosure here of a sacrament which works *ex opere operato*.

The point of emphasis in 1 Cor. x. 16–21 lies in the communion (κοινωνία) on the one hand with the body and blood of Christ, and on the other with the demons (or gods) who preside over the sacrificial feasts of the heathen. A suggestion that a moral element or matter of personal attitude enters into the specified communion is indicated by the apostle's dealing with it in its heathen connections. He does not assume that the mere eating of meat offered to heathen gods or demons involves communion with them. Christians may eat without scruple whatever is sold in the shambles, asking no question about its antecedents. Communion with demons ensues only where the meat is distinctly recognized as affiliated with the demons by previous con-

secration. Eating in that case is derelict as making one, on the score of his consent, a table companion of demons. As Réville remarks: "The apostle here appeals to the religious idea which inspired the sacred meals of the Greeks, communion with the gods by the absorption of a common food, belonging to the gods by the fact of consecration. The *κοινωνία τῶν δαιμονίων* does not mean the absorption of the flesh of the demons any more than the *κοινωνία τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου* means the absorption of the altar. . . . In the one and the other alternative there is involved the solidarity attested by the religious meal, on the one hand with the demons, on the other with the body and blood of Christ."[17] Paul views the solidarity or communion with the demons, which is realized in the religious meal, as ethically conditioned in the

[17] Cited by Kennedy, St. Paul and the Mystery Religions, p. 273.

case of professing Christians. It is quite in order to suppose that he regarded communion with the body or the blood of Christ—in other words, with the Christ whose body was broken and whose blood was shed[18]—as also ethically conditioned. In fact, he explicitly indicates further on in the epistle that this was his point of view, in that he speaks of those who, in their careless lack of consideration for what the consecrated elements stand, eat and drink judgment unto themselves. What we have, then, in the passage on "communion" is the thought of an ethically conditioned fellowship or solidarity with the crucified Saviour through the medium of a sacred feast. No literal eating of the Christ, no

[18] The propriety of this rendering is suggested by a phase of the passage. If by communion with the altar is to be understood communion with the God who is represented by the altar, then by communion with the body and blood of Christ we may understand communion with the suffering and dying Christ. That in both instances the sacred person was regarded as the real object of communion cannot well be doubted.

sacrament working *ex opere operato*, needs to be supposed.

So readily does the remaining passage (1 Cor. xi. 20–34) lend itself to a symbolical interpretation, that it verily has the appearance of a *tour de force* to read into it any crass realism. What is eaten in the eucharistic feast is spoken of, not as the body of Christ, but as bread. A memorial function is ascribed to the eating: it proclaims the Lord's death till he comes. Furthermore, as noted above, the benefit of partaking of the elements is conditioned on the appropriate religious attitude. It is said, to be sure, that the one who eats and drinks unworthily makes himself guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But these words are entirely pertinent in connection with the symbolical interpretation. He who treats despitefully the symbol pours contempt on the things symbolized, just as one

who tramples on his country's flag vents despite upon his country.

Paul's conception of the eucharist was doubtless not of that type which is likely to be taken by a prosaic mind, but, rather, such as is congenial to an intense poetic soul. He had a most vivid impression of the reality of Christ and of his intimate presence in every Christian function normally fulfilled. He would have been in pronounced contradiction with himself had he not thought of the Master as being effectively present with earnest and faith-inspired disciples in the solemn commemoration of his passion. Herein he shows a certain kinship with a view of the eucharist which had much currency among the Greek Fathers, the view namely that Christ in his spiritual nature, or as the Logos, comes into a relation with the consecrated elements analogous to that assumed to the body appropriated in

his incarnation, thereby imparting to them a special efficacy.[19] The Pauline view of the effective spiritual presence of Christ in the eucharist has, we say, a degree of kinship with the given patristic conception. But the kinship is still at a notable remove from identity. What Paul emphasized was not a special relation of Christ to the consecrated elements, but the ethically conditioned presence of Christ to the believing recipient of those elements.

[19] Gieseler, Dogmengeschichte, p. 411; Schweitzer, Paul and His Interpreters, pp. 200, 201. Compare A. Lagarde, The Latin Church in the Middle Ages, p. 51.

## CHAPTER VI

## THE QUESTION OF THE INDEBTEDNESS OF THE JOHANNINE WRITINGS, AND OF OTHER PORTIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, TO THE MYSTERY RELIGIONS

By the Johannine writings in this connection we denote the fourth Gospel and the epistles (especially the first) bearing the name of John. On the authorship of the Apocalypse no pronouncement is designed. A separate treatment is appropriate to it on account of its special character.

Among preliminary considerations the Jewish lineage of the author of the fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles is worthy of note. The fact that he was of Jewish birth and training is commonly admitted. Good

evidence appears in the language of the Gospel. The construction betrays the Hebrew antecedents of the writer. The sentences are for the most part coordinated, not subordinated. Of genuine Greek period-building scarcely a trace is to be found.[1] The tenor of the contents bears witness to like antecedents. While the evangelist thinks of contemporary Jews as irreconcilable opponents of the Christian faith, he takes a high view of the historic vocation of Judaism. Christ is represented as claiming that salvation is from the Jews, and as coming to his own proper possession in his advent to the Jews. Much care is exhibited to join events in the life of Christ with Old Testament texts. In fine, the evidence is decisive for the Jewish lineage of the evangelist. Moreover, there are fairly substantial reasons for supposing him to have been

[1] Wetzel, Die Echtheit des Evangeliums Johannis, p. 36.

a Palestinian resident. His accurate knowledge of Palestinian localities is best explained on this ground. It is much more likely that he came to that knowledge as a resident, favored with repeated opportunities for observation, than as one who had simply made a fugitive tour through the land. Now antecedents of this kind have something more than an indifferent bearing on our theme. We are entitled to suppose in the author of the Johannine writings as substantial barriers to an appreciative attitude toward the Mystery Religions as Jewish descent and training could furnish.[2]

A second preliminary consideration, having distinct pertinency, is the relation of the Johannine writings to the Pauline. Admittedly the latter were influential antecedents of the former. However much they may differ in

[2] "I imagine," says Moffatt, "that the author of the fourth Gospel would not have failed to sympathize with Philo's passionate aversion to all Mystery Religions" (The Expositor, July, 1913).

respect of form, their close affinity in vital doctrinal points is beyond dispute. Even the doctrine of the Logos, as Professor Bacon rightly claims,[3] is already present in all but name, in the Pauline Epistles. In so far, then, as the points in the writings of Paul, which have been supposed to align his teachings with the Mystery Religions, are substantially reproduced in the Johannine writings, sufficient historical antecedents are assigned them. There is no need to discover in them the influential working of the pagan cults, which undoubtedly their author regarded quite as unfavorably as did his apostolic predecessor. Now, the points of alignment which are capable of being specified between the Johannine writings and the Mystery Religions are not appreciably different from those which are alleged to pertain to the Pauline writings. It is

[3] The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate, pp. 5, 6.

indeed our conviction that not a single specific point can be mentioned as belonging to the former which is not discoverable in the latter. With this conclusion it is doubtless possible to combine the view that the atmosphere of the Johannine writings is more pervasively tinged with the Mysteries than is that of the Pauline. But a verdict to this effect has not been brought in by a unanimous jury. A dissenting voice may be heard in these words of Ramsay: "We cannot regard John's Gospel as specially comprehensible to the Gentiles, though it was written in Asia for Asiatic Hellenes. It is deeply Palestinian in its cast of thought and expression; and the religious atmosphere in which it moves is non-Hellenic to a greater degree than the writings of Paul."[4] The distinguished student of Pauline lore may possibly be challenged in

[4] The Teaching of Paul in Terms of the Present Day, p. 50.

respect of this statement. Firm ground, however, remains for the contention that a substantially full complement of the ideas supposedly affiliating with the Mysteries, which can be discovered in the Johannine writings, is discoverable in the Pauline Epistles. The Johannine writer could have taken them from that quarter if he needed to borrow them at all. Of course, if Paul took them from the Mystery Religions, ultimate obligation to that source, on the part of the Johannine writer, is not disproved. But it has been our attempt in previous chapters to show that Paul's obligations were inconsiderable. The point of the present paragraph is therefore made with entire consistency.

In their doctrine of Christ's person and saving office the Johannine writings may not locate the emphasis just where it was placed by Paul; but

sufficient antecedents for all the elements of the doctrine were furnished by the Pauline teaching. That teaching was an incomparably more fertile source of suggestion than the Mystery Religions could possibly have been. It is an historical illusion which permits one to suppose that a writer of Jewish lineage and training could have felt the least motive to draw from them. The attitude of the Evangelist was not and could not have been anything like that of the twentieth-century student who enforces himself to sympathize with all the varied manifestations of religion. Had he been interested to look into any one of the contemporary Mysteries, he would have seen in it nothing better than a heap of fantastic mythological fancies. His verdict would have been quite as scornful at least as was that which the broad-minded Alexandrian Clement in his day passed upon the Mystery

cults.[5] For the essential trend of New Testament Christology and soteriology an adequate source can be found entirely apart from recourse to cults so obnoxious to the minds of New Testament writers. The powerful impression made by the teaching, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, combined with the ideal pictures in the Prophets and the higher view of the Messiah in later Judaism, are reasonably regarded as sufficient historical factors, when impinging upon such deep and impressionable souls as those of the apostle Paul and the fourth evangelist, to bring forth the Christological and soteriological content. The conception of the Logos, as developed in Greek philosophy, was indeed fitted to serve as an auxiliary in respect of formulating Christological belief; but the belief itself was not

[5] Address to the Greeks, chap. ii. Compare Minucius Felix, Octavius, chap. xxi.

dependent upon the contributions of philosophy.

The Johannine writings are relatively distinguished by their valuation of knowledge. This feature has been supposed to be a token of contact with the Mystery Religions. In particular the rating of the vision of God as the culmination of enlightenment and the supreme means of transformation into the divine likeness has been emphasized as a mark of interconnection. But closely examined, the point of view in the Johannine writings is found to be materially different from that of the Mysteries. In the former knowledge is conceived as ethically conditioned in the most thorough sense; in the latter the ethical condition is radically obscured, not to say obliterated, by the scope which is given to magic. In the former the vision of God comes from intimate spiritual fellowship with him. Every

one who hopes for it purifies himself even as he is pure. In the latter it is pictured as the result of an ecstatic uplift which serves as a means of momentary divine disclosure. The inference seems to be well grounded that the evangelist was too well instructed to take any lesson on this subject from the Mystery Religions. He agrees doubtless with their underlying supposition that divine revelation is the authentic source of knowledge. There is no need, however, to imagine that he falls in with the supposition because it was harbored by them. As a Hebrew he was legitimately heir to it, and it was an outstanding assumption with his predecessor, the apostle Paul. Possibly the evangelist discoursed on knowledge somewhat more fully than he would otherwise have done, owing to the occasion to present an offset to the Gnosticism which had begun to invade the Christian domain.

Assuredly, no more effective expedient against Gnostic propagandism could have been devised than the Johannine procedure, in which knowledge is at once honored and set in right relations.

A representation analogous to the Johannine antithesis between the seen and temporal on the one hand and the unseen and eternal on the other undoubtedly had place in the Hellenic domain. In that domain, however, by far the most prominent and influential setting forth of the antithesis occurred within the limits of the Platonic philosophy. If the fourth Evangelist must be accounted a debtor for this feature in his teaching, there is still very slight occasion to regard him as a debtor specifically to the Mystery Religions. That he was not a headlong borrower from any source, the Platonic included, is evinced by the fact that in the antithesis which he depicts no place is given to a meta-

physical dualism. He never paints the temporal visible world as intrinsically evil. The Christ whom he acknowledges truly came in the flesh, and he excoriates the rejecter of this historic fact as partaking of the spirit of antichrist.

The evidence for the assumption that the Johannine theology affiliates with the Mystery Religions, as incorporating high sacramental conceptions, strikes us as quite inadequate. As respects baptism only a single phrase can be cited in its behalf, namely, the declaration on being born of water and the Spirit (iii. 5). And here the conjunction of water with the Spirit seems to be exegetically designed. It serves to explain to Nicodemus the character of the new birth as being a cleansing. In the following verse the agent of the spiritual birth is explicitly declared to be the Spirit; and further on a complete basis is given for the

inference that the working of this agent is not tied to a baptismal occasion, his coming and going being like the unaccountable movements of the wind. Thus the passage on the new birth, taken as a whole, distinctly accentuates the primacy of the Spirit's agency. Professor Gardner keeps within the limits of a very decided probability when he says: "The idea that baptism by itself could regenerate would be to the writer as monstrous as the notion of Nicodemus that a man must enter again into his mother's womb. Here as in all parts of the Gospel, it is the Spirit that profiteth."[6]

The connection does not properly require any reference to the sayings of Christ addressed to the woman of Samaria (John iv. 13, 14). In the whole texture of those sayings there

[6] The Ephesian Gospel, p. 201. We have not thought it worth while to take special notice of the fact that the mention of water in John iii. 5 has been judged by some critics to have been no part of the original text (Wendt, The Gospel According to St. John, p. 120).

is no suggestion whatever of a baptismal washing. The stress is plainly on the inward appropriation of grace or truth which shall be in the recipient as "a well of water springing up unto eternal life." Scarcely more in demand is a reference to the declaration that out of the pierced side of Christ came both blood and water (xix. 34). The evangelist who records not so much as a single specific injunction of baptism, who represents Christ as denying the worth of any fleshly performance, as assigning life-giving virtue to his words, and as repeatedly affirming that in believing on him eternal life is to be found, in all likelihood did not construe the water which he associated with the blood as symbolical of any external rite. As in the Pauline teaching the objective and the subjective phase of Christ's saving office —the virtue of atonement and the virtue of a transforming life potency

—are most intimately conjoined, so we may believe that the Evangelist recognized the two phases as symbolized by the outpoured blood and water. By the one was expressed to his mind the efficacy of Christ as a propitiation, by the other the power of his spiritual presence to renovate and refresh the inner life.

The basis for the realistic view of the eucharist supposed to be contained in the sixth chapter of the Gospel is purely verbal rather than substantial. The chapter itself indicates clearly enough that the literal verbal sense must be transcended. In the earlier portion the same results are attributed to faith which later are ascribed to eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ. Furthermore, the eating and drinking are spoken of as unconditionally efficacious, nothing being said about eating or drinking unworthily. This plainly sug-

gests that they do not stand for mere bodily acts, but are to be construed as spiritual functions, or as figurative expressions for the believing appropriation of Christ in all the wealth of his saving truth. Finally, this interpretation is formally enforced in the unequivocal proposition, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you, are spirit and are life." The necessary induction could not be more suitably stated than in these words of Moffatt: "It is consonant with the characteristic mysticism of the writer's faith to say, that the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper must have been for him symbols, at best, of the presence and benefits of Christ."[7] Symbolism of this kind was not foreign to Jewish literary custom. In the semi-canonical book of Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom is repre-

[7] The Expositor, July, 1913.

sented as saying: "They that eat me shall yet be hungry; and they that drink me shall yet be thirsty" (xxiv. 21). "Metaphors from eating and drinking," says Inge, "are common in Talmudic literature, and Philo speaks of the Logos as the food of the soul. There was, therefore, nothing strange or unintelligible in the imagery of the [Johannine] discourse. To eat the Messiah would be readily understood to mean to receive spiritual nourishment from him, to live by his life."[8]

It may be conceded, or rather, affirmed, that the fourth evangelist was not indifferent to the sacraments; that he, indeed, set a distinct value upon them as suitable means of linking together in the apprehension of men the invisible and the visible. What is to be denied is the discovery of any warrantable ground for the conclusion

[8] Essays on Some Biblical Questions of the Day by Members of the University of Cambridge, p. 285.

that he imputed to the sacraments independent efficacy, the virtue of rites which work *ex opere operato*.

The similarity of the phraseology of the Johannine writings to that of the Hermetic literature is strongly emphasized by Reitzenstein, while at the same time he admits a notable contrast in spirit and thought.[9] Among the terms common to the two classes of writings "light" and "life" are conspicuous.[10] It is noticeable, however, that the Johannine writer has a pronounced fondness for broad categories and sharp antitheses, an inclination to develop his whole subject-matter about a few comprehensive and contrasted terms, such as light and darkness, life and death, love and hatred, sin and righteousness, the world and the Christian brotherhood. Now, in carrying out this bent it is

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[9] Poimandres, pp. 244, 245.

[10] Ibid., Greek text, I, 9, 12, 17, 21, 32, XIV, 9, 18, 19, pp. 330–347.

quite conceivable that he should have fallen into his peculiar phraseology without recourse to exterior models. His acquaintance with the Hermetic literature remains problematical, and the uncertain date of that literature makes a still further ground for indecision.

In any well-rounded dealing with the subject full account must be made of the respects in which the Johannine writings are strongly contrasted with the Mystery Religions. It will not be necessary, however, to state them here in detail, since they are identical with the points of contrast already specified between the Mystery Religions and New Testament Christianity as a whole.[11] In their advocacy of an open system, in their aloofness from astrology, sidereal mysticism, and naturalism in general, in their insistence on the ethical as opposed to the

[11] See Chapter III.

magical, in their avoidance of a pantheistic strain, and in their emphasis on a historical basis, the Johannine writings are in a different sphere from that of the Mystery Religions.[12]

The author of the book of Revelation may be credited with using the license common to apocalyptists to range widely for the symbols appropriate to a thoroughly picturesque style of writing. It would cause no surprise to find that he had gone into the field of ethnic beliefs and mythologies for the groundwork of some of his representations. Perhaps in what he says about the number of the "beast," and in his picture of the woman pursued by the dragon, we have tokens that he derived suggestions from that quarter. Facts of this order, however, give him no special association with the Mystery

[12] The points of contrast are well put by E. F. Scott, American Journal of Theology, July, 1916.

Religions, but only with the general store of ethnic mythology. From this store, too, he took only things incidental to his scene-painting.

In the Old Testament, the Jewish Alexandrian theology, and the Pauline writings entirely adequate antecedents were supplied to the Epistle to the Hebrews. There is exceedingly slight occasion to connect it with the Mystery Religions. The notion of a plurality of heavens appears, indeed (iv. 14, vii. 26); but a mere general expression of this notion was something in which any Jewish writer of the day might have indulged, and is no proof of belief in the elaborate cosmological scheme of the Mystery cults. The apparent reference to conversion as an enlightenment (x. 32) may have a certain affinity with the viewpoint of these cults, and the supposition that the choice of the expression was in-

fluenced from that quarter invites tolerance; but, on the other hand, no one can be assured that the writer was so destitute of capacity for analogical thinking that he did not of his own motion elect the expression. The characterization of Christ as "mediator" and "shepherd" may correspond to the employment of titles in one or another of the Mysteries. It is to be concluded, however, that too abundant sources of suggestion for these titles were furnished to the writer in his Pauline, Alexandrian, and Old Testament antecedents, to make the supposition of borrowing from a pagan source at all imperative. As for the special phrase, "great shepherd," it is parallel to the expression "great high priest," which is twice used in the epistle, and suits the earnest endeavor of the author to picture the pre-eminence of Christ. Some other points have been alleged to give evidence of

borrowing from the Mysteries; but it is not worth while to mention them. They concern matters that were mere commonplaces in the current Christianity.

## CONCLUSION

It would not be venturesome to predict that the radical assumption as to the influence of the Mystery Religions on the form and content of primitive Christianity must recede from the field. Like the Pan-Babylonian theory of some years ago it represents an extreme. Taken in the concrete —the only way in which they could be taken prior to scholarly induction —the Mystery Religions, as they existed in the first century, were in no wise adapted to appeal to Christian leaders. Their opportunity to react upon Christian thought and feeling, especially in the direction of ceremonial magic, came later, when great masses which had been leavened by them poured into the church. Even then the entire adverse result was not

due to them. Much of it is to be attributed to the natural tendency of any system, which seeks control over men, to gravitate into mechanism and pretense when not safeguarded by most potent and wholesome influences.

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